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The artists and the poets have taken childhood as a symbol of purity. The triumph of the Saints would be incomplete without the babies with puffed cheeks and white wings frequenting the clouds. Kin to the angels? These terrible little animals, in whom are all the vices, whose first instincts are toward cruelty, deceit, and perversity; they are hardly sib to the white brotherhood. The baby—every baby, yours as well as mine—is a monstrous brute, cruel, stupid, perverse. Its first instinct is to inflict pain.

From year to year the child lives through all those transformations by which the race of men passed on its way from primal life to complex, altruistic civilization. At first it is a sort of soft and flabby mollusk; it vomits, sleeps, fills itself again, utterly unconcerned with exterior life. As soon as it can walk it tries to kill, to murder, to dominate; a bully where kittens, flies, puppies, or younger children are concerned, it is, like all beasts of prey, a coward before the strong. The boy has all the instincts of the barbarian. Shaking his wooden sword, he harks back atavistically to that period in the history of the young race when warriors fought each other for food or women. The little girl in the same way lives again the old life of her slavish origin. Unconsciously she returns to the epoch when, a sick and furtive animal, she could only escape the cudgel of the healthy male by pleasing him with submissive and sensual coquettices. And so she is avid for ribbons and gewgaws and bright bits of metal. She makes little joyous cries. She grimaces and poses with perverse coquetry. She is an atavistic recurrence of the female slave soliciting the attention and good will of her master. As she grows older she plays with her dolls as the slave played with her young when her master was at war. She is gluttonous, deceitful, untruthful. She lies. She tricks. She weeps copiously to escape punishment. However, if an eye is kept on her she obeys orders better than a boy. But, unwatched, she can not be trusted. Sent to school, she pretends to study, perhaps does study, but she is never instructed in any of the subjects with which she has coquetted. The boy revolts, grumbles, defies his master, but he learns.

These two barbarous lives run in parallel lines. The girl has all the vices of the antique slave and concubine. The boy, half soldier, half brigand at heart, cheats his fellows if he fears them, beats them if they are feeble, cringes to the rich and strong. A boys' school is an exhibition of the life of the Huns. At the convent the little girls play with each other the comedy of enticing and placating men.

These are the angels—

Blessed beings, symbols of purity and innocence, loved of the poets and painters inept in thought.

What a monstrous lie this is! It is not until forty that a man can school himself into virtue. No woman under thirty would dare to tell her thoughts. Little by little during the years man—if his life is not too troubled and his passions are not too stormy—teaches himself how to live. He comes to recognize how base are the instincts of primitive man. First in others, then in himself, he sees what wrong the passions work. He knows his own weakness and is indulgent to others. Familiarity with animal passions has demonstrated their insipidity. He is less ready to sacrifice his conception of right in order to satisfy them. He is on the road to sane and vigorous virtue.

Of this the child knows nothing. Bestially he follows the instincts of the primal animal and the anthropoid.

As a matter of fact the wicked are those who never grow old. You see them in the taverns and houses of sensuality, in the gaols and prisons—still children, giving full sway to those instincts for vice out of which the grown man has educated himself.

These are the angels.



The British creature is very gross. At best he is merely a more civilized German. His art, when it is original, is always coarse. There is much of the brute in it.

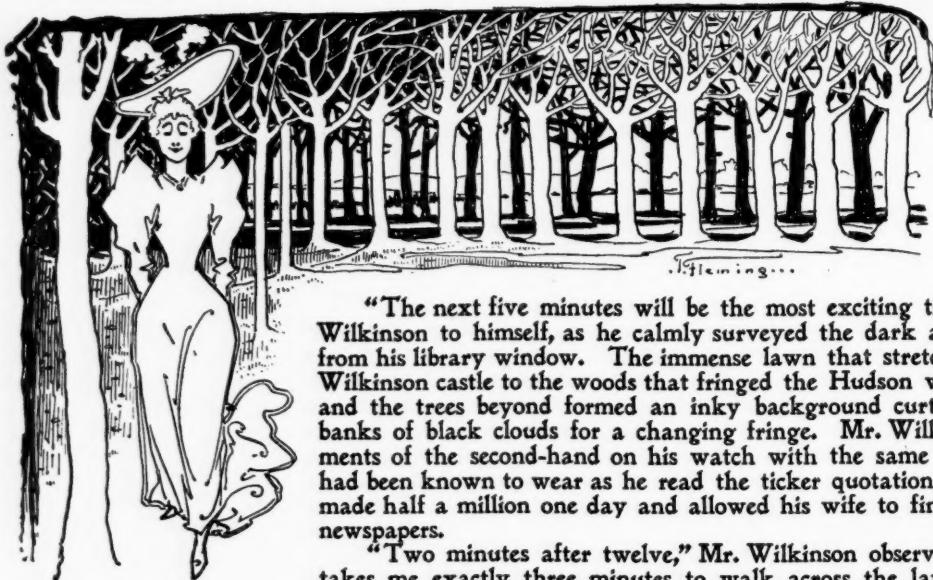
I need hardly tell you I have been looking over the print Fleming gave me. It is an excellent copy of Rowlandson's "Staircase," that picture in which there is such magnificent drawing, such strenuous action and bold characterization, and, withal, such immense vulgarity. It is very English. I have had portions of it redrawn for "M'lle New York." The picture in its entirety, however, it would be impossible to reproduce in a journal which is read by maidens of sixty and blithe, but innocent, girls. You will find it, however, in any of the libraries and, if you are an artist, you will pardon the grossness of the theme for the sake of the admirable craftsmanship. You may remember that there is a sinuous staircase twisting up into a dome. Up the staircase passes a gala crowd as to some Georgian ball. But a cursed dog has got into the crowd and first one trips and then another, until men and women are swept downward, head over heels, in indecorous confusion. (From a study of the picture one may constate certain "documents," to use the Zolaistic term; as, for instance, that in the reigns of the Georges the British female creature did not wear underclothing; also that they wore plumed feathers at evening receptions; also that the very young men had begun to go without powder, and that snuff-taking was universal.) I should not have adverted to this drawing were it not for the fact that Rowlandson, to my mind, has never quite had his due. He was no more ribald than Hogarth and he was quite as good a draughtsman. In addition he had an extraordinary fund of humour. To be sure, his humour was indecent and ferocious—perhaps it was rather an animal gaiety—but it was very real. Rembrandt, as you know, left a number of drawings in which there was a grim and awful lubricity. There is much of this in Rowlandson's work. Women hurtling down a staircase, women whose garments are disordered by the wind; women in every posture ridiculous and degrading; this was one side of Rowlandson's libertinage. A very different side is seen in that marvellous drawing where the girls lie, astonished at the dawn. In one coloured print you see a naked acrobat bending himself double in a hoop, to the droning of a barrel-organ; in another a learned doctor passes while a woman, her clothes upgathered, perches like an ape on the head of a man who blows a horn. You will ask me the meaning of this, and I can not answer. Doubtless one might read into it some stuprate symbol. What I would get at is that this second manner of Rowlandson is marked by an incoherent realism. His figures are out of life, but, jumbled into strangely libidinous groups, comic in their very unreality. And over all is this uncouth English merriment, massive, ventripotent, brutal, ordurous. I do not think that Rowlandson's soul was infamous; it was merely English. The slim, white, gracile nudities which pleased the frank Greeks had no meaning for him. For him there were suggestions of erethism in great, bloated women romping in a bar-room; for him there was atrocious charm in blowsy women of title tumbling down a staircase. The appeal of the Most Low must be very insidious to tempt the Latin, but to the British creature it must be made grossly, broadly, shamelessly. And so I see in Rowlandson an artist who is intensely and typically English. The beautiful spirit of Purity which has inspired so many incomparable works of art, which brooded over Fra Angelico and Gruenwald, Roger Van der Weyden and Memling of Bruges, as it broods now over Puvis de Chavannes, has never inspired one great English picture. The British creature is myopic. When he passes from the intimate realism of Hogarth and Rowlandson he ceases to create. And, again, his realism has only been vital when it has been complicated with ordure and elementary lust.

The print Fleming gave me suggested these vagrom thoughts.

THE PRINT FLEMING GAVE ME

V. T.





DID MR. WILKINSON HANG THE GHOST?

CHARLES
EUGENE
HAMLIN

"The next five minutes will be the most exciting time in my life," said Mr. Wilkinson to himself, as he calmly surveyed the dark and cloudy midnight sky from his library window. The immense lawn that stretched from the feudal-like Wilkinson castle to the woods that fringed the Hudson was an ocean of darkness, and the trees beyond formed an inky background curtain that seemed to have banks of black clouds for a changing fringe. Mr. Wilkinson followed the movements of the second-hand on his watch with the same cool and smiling look he had been known to wear as he read the ticker quotations in Wall street when he made half a million one day and allowed his wife to find it out the next in the newspapers.

"Two minutes after twelve," Mr. Wilkinson observed. "On a dark night it takes me exactly three minutes to walk across the lawn and thread my way through the orchard to the grave. Therefore, if in three minutes the moon shines through the clouds I shall have the pleasure of beholding my ghost on the one hundredth anniversary of his first appearance."

"I may as well confess to myself," Mr. Wilkinson added reflectively, "that I should be greatly disappointed if under these circumstances the ghost should refuse to appear and talk with me."

With the satisfied air of one who knows his ground thoroughly Mr. Wilkinson advanced to the door, the happy smile on his thin lips and an eager, absorbed look in his eyes denoting the approach of a moment of supreme happiness. No other sign indicated that Mr. Wilkinson was undertaking an unusual occupation. As he was within a few feet of a grove of immense trees the moon suddenly lighted up the scene and revealed a short distance from Mr. Wilkinson a formless thing that stood on the grave where the body of the murdered Dutch giant, Diederich Dustane, had been buried a century ago. Undoubtedly at that moment Mr. Wilkinson had a very severe struggle between pride and curiosity. The former won. Taking his watch in his hand, Mr. Wilkinson carefully looked at the minute and second hands. "Good!" he ejaculated. "I calculated the time of my arrival to a second. Indeed, I must congratulate Clock & Sons on the accuracy of their timepieces."

Mr. Wilkinson then cleared his throat.

Taking off his hat, he advanced with a little more dignity than usual toward the mysterious object, which began to reveal the outlines of a human figure.

"You will pardon me," began Mr. Wilkinson, "if I take the pleasure of introduction on myself. I am Mr. Frank E. Wilkinson of the present century; by occupation a stock-broker; by birth half Dutch on my mother's side and half Yankee on my father's side. Pardon the intrusion of personal explanations, but as the situation is somewhat novel, I am forced to say that I long debated the propriety of my addressing you first since I am not half Dutch, while you are an ancestor. I trust that you will appreciate my embarrassment, and will not, therefore, impugn my motives in—er—er—calling on you."

There was no reply. With increasing ceremony of manner and a perceptible tone of anxiety in his voice, Mr. Wilkinson began again:

"I have approached you with the respect I felt due you; I now beg to remind you that I can insist on my rights. Still, it would distress me to be obliged to call your attention to the fact that you, according to the laws of all nations, are my guest. Er—er—the fact is you are on my land. You will thus perceive that courtesy demands from you an acknowledgement of my hospitality to you."

Again there was no reply, and the shape appeared to expand and take on a threatening attitude. Mr. Wilkinson experienced a feeling of indignation. His manner was as cool and ceremonious as ever, although he could not conceal his disappointment and a rapidly growing sense of injury. With deliberation and

precision of utterance, in order that his words could not be mistaken, Mr. Wilkinson said:

"It pains me to insist on my rights. But unless you explain your presence on my property, I shall exercise my rights and arrest you."

Again there was no reply, although Mr. Wilkinson fancied that he saw a look of astonishment creep over the face of the apparition. It is to be regretted that at this juncture Mr. Wilkinson lost his temper and terminated this interesting and unprecedented line of argument. But with great deliberation and marked emphasis of feeling Mr. Wilkinson said:

"Damn your Dutch dullness."

Then, with a slightly aggrieved tone of voice, Mr. Wilkinson continued: "Perhaps I stated my feelings rather strongly. Yet, can you not see what a remarkable opportunity you have of being the first ghost on record to accept authoritatively — authoritatively, I say — an official invitation from a man of flesh and blood to enter into communication with him and settle for all time perplexing questions about ghosts."

Of course there was no reply, and being a man of action, resolution, and his word, Mr. Wilkinson proceeded immediately to execute a plan he had rapidly evolved on the spot. Seizing the remaining rope of an old swing that hung from a neighbouring limb, Mr. Wilkinson made a noose and threw it over a branch so that the rays of the moon would cast a shadow of the loop over or near the ghost's shoulders.

"If," reasoned Mr. Wilkinson with a smile, "an actual noose can bind a man of flesh and blood, why should not its shadow bind a ghost? I have no doubt," he added with a pardonable smile, "that my reasoning is correct."

Then, with a little dexterous manoeuvring, Mr. Wilkinson managed by holding the noose in his hand to cast its shadow exactly around the shape's neck. As he did so Mr. Wilkinson observed with what sounded like a chuckle, "Anyhow, if I can't tow your ghostship along, I'll start your stumps. I'm talking United States now, and mean business."

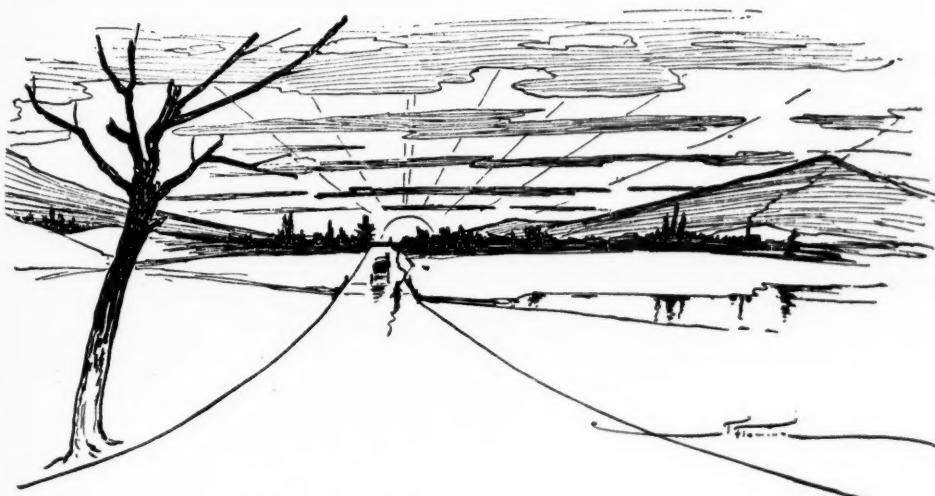
Then Mr. Wilkinson moved the noose toward him. Wonder upon wonder! The immense cavernous eyes of the ghost bulged; a look of anger appeared on its face; but the apparition swayed toward Mr. Wilkinson, raising its arms.

"Hurrah!" shouted the now excited man, "I've caught a ghost."

But at that moment, as luck would have it, the moon went under a cloud, and in his jubilation Mr. Wilkinson did not notice it in time. He backed off step by step, holding the noose in front of him, intending to go as far as the rope would allow in order to frighten the ghost into submission and speech. But after Mr. Wilkinson had taken ten steps the moon reappeared and Mr. Wilkinson stood as one paralyzed. To be sure he was now standing under a tree where the moon could not throw a shadow of the noose in his hand, but the ghost had vanished, and with it the ghostly noose.

"My God!" ejaculated Mr. Wilkinson. "If a real noose can hang a man — Oh! have I missed the opportunity of a lifetime and killed the ghost?"

Then Mr. Wilkinson told me the story and asked me this question, which I can not answer and refer to you: Did Mr. Wilkinson hang the ghost? It is a ghostly conundrum. *Nicht wahr?*



THE USURPER

H. MAZEL

The Woman led us to the holy Ideal. "Dethrone it!" she said. And we obeyed her. She added, "Worship me; I am the Ideal." And we worshipped her.

One night there came a ship, filled with warriors cuirassed in gold. A woman lay in wait for them. She watched them pass along the marble quays, their robe trailing. She, going before them, opened the doors; and from hall to hall they passed, till they came to the chamber where the Basileus, in cope and tiara, slept on his throne of gold, beside another throne of gold, empty because it was reserved for the Most High.

Beautiful thrones, in truth, upheld by lions and unicorns, all bronze.

"Ecce homo," she said. And one of the warriors drew near and laughed and plucked the white beard. But he opened his eyes, the old man — fulgorant eyes; and the golden lions roared and the unicorns, all bronze, lifted their heads.

And the warriors, cuirassed in gold, fell upon their knees and worshipped the old man, because he was God.

But the woman said, "Are you fools or cowards?" And denuding her impurity, she said again, "This is the reward of him who shall slay the old man!" Then a great negro advanced, followed by others emboldened, toward the Phantom in the white cope. But of a sudden this one lifted his hand, and the cope which was white became black.

And the warriors, cuirassed with gold, fell upon their knees and worshipped the old man, because he was God.

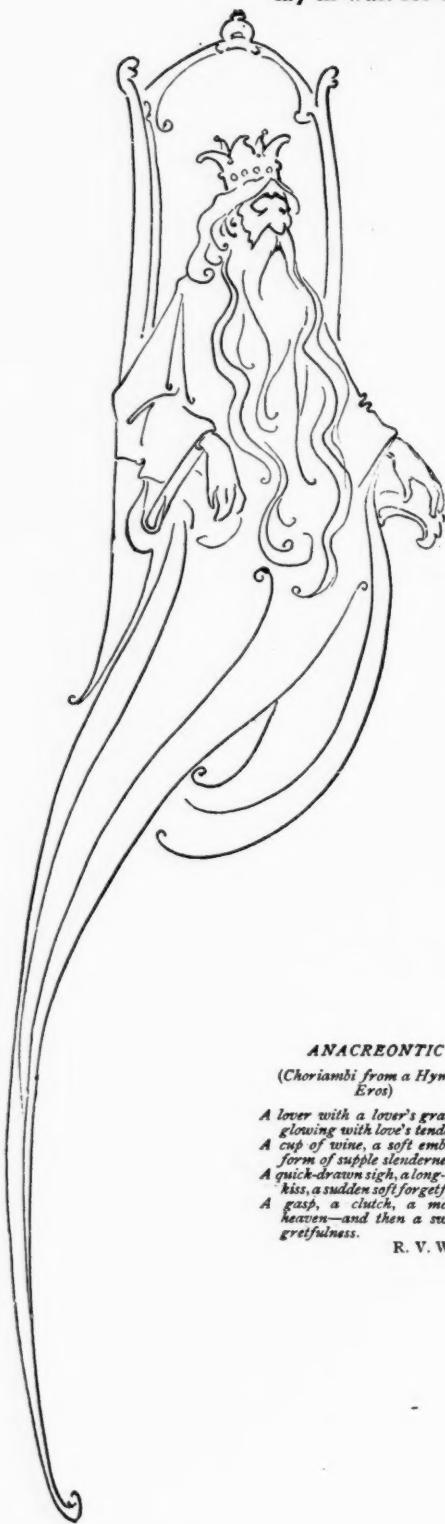
But she said, "I know all that. If you kill him I swear I will perform the same prodigies." Then, for they were curious, they rushed upon the Phantom; they gouged out his eyes; they broke his teeth; they cut off his nose and ears; they tore out his hair. Then the woman approached the throne, in truth a fair throne; and the lions of gold roared, and the unicorns lifted up their heads, all bronze; and on the steps of the throne she gave herself to all, because all had killed.

And the warriors, cuirassed in gold, having played with her, fell upon their knees and worshipped her, because she was God!

ANACREONTIC (Choriambi from a Hymn to Eros)

*A lover with a lover's grace, and
glowing with love's tenderness;
A cup of wine, a soft embrace, a
form of supple slenderness;
A quick-drawn sigh, a long-drawn
kiss, a sudden soft forgetfulness;
A gasp, a clutch, a moment's
heaven—and then a sweet re-
grieffulness.*

R. V. W. A.



She had stopped playing.

I waited and waited and waited, but there wasn't a sound. No, the divinity that had been hacking at my ends for the past two weeks would play no more that night. I tried to imagine her closing the piano and then unloosening her hair, then unbuttoning a shoe, then removing a jacket or unlacing a corset, preparatory to stepping into the land where she would dream of those wild, weird compositions of hers. For she must dream of them. No man, no woman, could play as she does and dream as do ordinary mortals. Especially that phantasy that she had been playing these last three nights. The mad, wild run that carries one down over massive boulders like a torrent, splashing, dashing headlong from height to height, through crags and falls, with its tumultuous, maddening roar—and then suddenly all quiet, as if one had met the Maker and had paused, half humbly, half apologetically, and then ending in a plaintive note of repentance.

I have tried to play it myself—and I can play. I tried to play it with the tone, the wildness that she does, but my version sounded more like a babbling brook than a rushing torrent, ending more like a child's atonement than a sinner's expiation.

I wonder who she is. This is the fourteenth day since I first heard her, and I have asked myself that question a hundred times each day. I have watched for her for hours, but she never goes out. Then I have gone up-stairs on pretense; but the cadaverous little wretch, with his bluish-grey beard and yellow eyes, who seems to be her keeper, always barred me out. I have played back to her when she was in a plaintive mood, but her answer was always hopeless, always in that wild, despairing key, always in G. I wonder why she always answers me in G.

But to-night she appealed to me. Those last two bars were for me; she meant them for hope.

Is she young? Is she old? No! A woman who can play as she does will never be old. I will answer her; I will write—but how get the communication into her hand? Perhaps the old wretch is her husband. But what of that? She can not care for him, and I—I understand her.

I sat down and wrote, "Will you marry me?" She would understand.

Then I folded the note, blew out the light, and went up-stairs.

The rooms were all dark and silent. There was not even the sound of breathing.

I knocked. No answer.

I knocked again, louder. Then I waited.

I thought I could hear my heart beating. My body was in a cold sweat, yet my face was burning.

I tremblingly raised my hand to knock a third time, when the harsh voice of the man, coming from the bottom crack of the door, rasped out:

"Go away!"

I tried to speak, but could not.

"Go away!"

I turned the knob of the door. I could hear him breathe harder as he said:

"If you come in I will kill you."

"I want to see you," I replied.

"Go away!"

"I must see you." I was shivering from head to foot and felt as though I were about to swoon. I threw myself against the door; but it was locked. Then I waited.

I heard him move away and then come back. He turned the lock almost noiselessly. I shook off the fright and faced myself for the attack.

He opened the door softly. I saw the flash of steel and caught his arm as it descended. I grabbed him by the throat, and he wound himself about me as we struggled in the doorway. He fixed his teeth on my nose and bit clean through the bone. I could stand it no longer; I wrenched the knife from him and jabbed it into his side. There was a gurgle and he was dead. His legs and his arms were entwined about me and his teeth were still in my nose. I cut his jaw open, and as he dropped to the floor the blood streamed down my face.

I lit the light and there—

There on the floor was she—naked and dead.

Her face was fair and young, and her reddish hair hung in clusters. Across a white throat was a long red mark, and the whiteness of her breast was partly hidden by the streams of warm blood.

I kissed the lips, drawn downward in sorrow, and then plunged the dagger into her dead murderer's heart.

Then I went back to my room and played the weird phantasy just as she played it; but I will never play it again.

MUSIC

G. HENRY PAYNE

COMPLAINTE—EPITAPHE

La Femme,
Mon ame;
Ah! quels
Appels!

Pastels
Mortels
Qu'on 'blame
Mes gammes!

Un fou
S'avance,
Et danse.
Silence.
Lui, ou?
Concom.

JULES LAFORGUE





MUNCH, THE NORSE ARTIST

Edvard Munch, who studied both in Munich and Paris, is known fairly well on the continent, but so far as I know there is only one of his works—a sketch in coloured chalks—in this country. In his native land he has never been appreciated. The journals of Kristiania assert that he offends public morality. His pictures are refused admittance to the galleries. I have seen many of his pictures, it is true, which should not be shown to young girls. It would be a trifle absurd, however, to confine art within the limit of the young person's imagination.

If you can imagine Rowlandson blended with Puvis de Chavannes in equal proportions you will have a fair idea of Edvard Munch. His art is at once spermatozoidal and spiritual. He pictures violent, dishevelled lovers astray in black forests—creatures primeval in the ferocity of their passion; he pictures death and the horrors of the tomb—all this with immense force and urgency.

I have redrawn from a woodcut in "La Revue Blanche" this whimsical black-and-white, which is typical of Edvard Munch only in his whimsical mood. The painter himself has put into words his interpretation of the drawing.



I stopped and leaned against the balustrade, almost dead with fatigue. Over the blue-black fjord hung clouds, red as blood—as tongues of flame. My friends passed on, and alone, trembling with anguish, I listened to the great, infinite cry of nature.

THE BISHOP AND THE LORD

V. T.



Mary Magdalene had her surname of magdalo a castell: and was borne of right noble lynage and parents: whiche were descended of the lynage of kynges: And her fader was named Sirus and her moder eucharye: She wyth her broder lazare and her suster martha possessed the castel of magdalo: whiche is two miles fro nazareth: & bethany: the castel whiche is nygh to Iherusalem and also a grete parte of Iherusalem. whiche al thise thynges they departed amoneg them in suchwe wyse that marye had the castelle magdalo. whereof she had her name magdalene: And lazare had the parte of the cytee of Iherusalem: and martha had to her parte bethanye.

Legenda Aurea of Jacobus de Voragine, Second English Edition, Caxton (1493) f. 184, ver. 80.

The towers of Magdalo are the confidents of the sky. All red they are, when the red twilights fall; they are sombre in storm; in the gold daylight, gold. Slowly Mary Magdalene paced the terrace of her palace. Below she saw the village, where the little girls passed, white-robed, with missals in their hands, and beyond, the harbour, where the great ships spread their gaudy sails: while the sea, all yellow, purred like an indolent tiger-cat. But Mary Magdalene is sad.

See, dear God! how beautiful the woman is. Her flesh is of ermine and satin, her hair all gold. She leans on the balcony: the balcony is monstrous with griffins made in iron: and watches a ship drop anchor in the harbour. A high ship, exultant with music. The music floats up to her from the hautbois harsh and the tambourines; but the sound of the flutes is subtle, voluptuous, and sad. Music lascivious, enervate, hallucinate:

The bayaderes dance with naked feet, ecstatic, hieratic: she remembers the dance of the bayaderes. Their coral anklets clattered; over their impassioned heads they waved their hands,

clicking their blackened nails; they danced : Even the bishop of St. Ives, her fatuous lover, looked at the dancing girls a long, long time and smiled with his red-lipped mouth; the bishop of St. Ives : It was in the great hall of Magdalo, superbly tapestried with leather of Cordova, on which the griffins ramped and centaurs : In the bronze candelabra flamed the tapers of yellow wax; Magdalene sat among her lords : The dancers whirled among the marble pillars, onyx and malachite; they whirled and shouted, lascivious priestesses of an unholy bacchanal; with unspeakable pantomime they danced : their lascivious eyes lighted up the dark corners of the soul : supple as serpents, snakes rose and supple, among carnal flowers, strangely beautiful : fruit of the damned, dear God : exaudi nos!

* * * * *

But the soul of Mary of Magdalo was not in this pagan festival. Far it fled; for the music, like an April wind, scattered the cantharides of desire. Dreams fluttered, like butterflies, about her soul. Again she saw the church. The candles burned for God. And in the dusk, behind a veil of incense, shone the great Christ of St. Ives, with a bloody brow and wounded breast, the naked arms spread on the cross. All in white the choir-boys chanted:

*Quem queritis in sepulchro,
O Christicola!
Ihesum Nasarenum crucifixum,
O calicola!*

* * * * *

When evening fell the air was very soft in Magdalo, and Mary went abroad with the people of her court. She was borne in a litter. By her side her lords rode, making their horses caracole for mirth. They talked gaily in the soft evening as they passed through the streets. From afar came the twitter of guitars, plucked under ladies' windows. They passed the gates of the city and turned to watch the purple twilight fade on the towers and belfry. Then of a sudden they saw the shepherds tending their flocks. Among them stood a man in white linen :

This was Jesus.

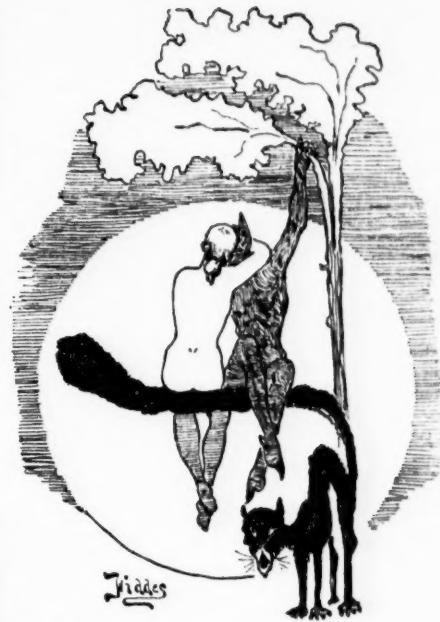
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For Mary Magdalene he shone like the first star. He approached very slowly, under the branches where the little birds trilled their evening prayers; he caressed the lambs; so slowly he approached. Pale and beautiful he walked among the trees, his naked feet shunning the daisies. For Mary the grove where Jesus walked became a cloister; the troubled leaves sang litanies. All her blood fled to her heart; she was whiter than marble. For Mary it was as though Jesus himself officiated at mass, all resplendent still with the mystic splendour of the Host. He blessed, like the bishop, but without jewels on his fingers and without the pomp of the chasuble royal with oriflays. For Mary the shepherds were the levites and the sheep a procession of the saved souls of men and women.

Jesus drew near the gentlemen. They were silent. But Mary cried aloud, for on the ivory brow of Jesus she saw drops of blood as if the thorns had been bound again upon the head of the sweet Prophet.

* * * * *

Jesus disappeared in the grey night among the hawthorne-trees, all grey. Slowly they returned to Magdalo. And that night Mary sobbed in her scented bed, but in her heart there was a tender joy, wondrous.



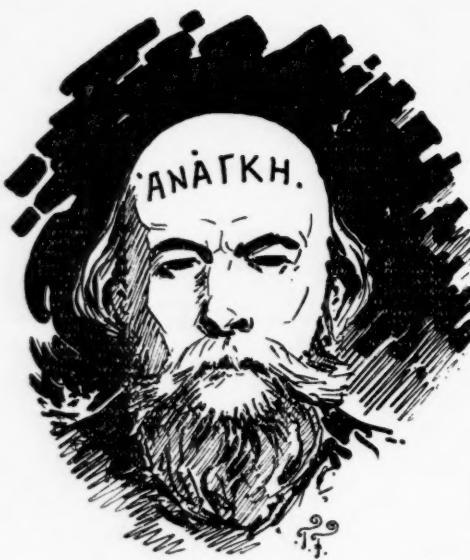
*Au clair de la lune
Mon ami Pierrot,
Filons en costume,
prendre la-haut!
Ma cervelle est morte,
Que le Christ l'emporte !
Beins a la Lune,
La boucha en sero.*

JULES LAFORGUE

THE WEB OF FATE

*A weaver wove a web from the hair of a Virgin,
And those who wore the garment knew no sin.
"I am purer than the First Mother," boasted the Maiden,
And she stalked up and down the earth, vain of her vanity.
"See!" cried the pink Youth,
"I have no Virgin's mantle;
Let us sport where the rushes grow thickest by the river."
Lo, the Maiden cast the weaver's garment from her,
And from that time there was sin.*

WENTWORTH SALVIN



IMPRESSIONS OF VERLAINE

VANCE THOMPSON

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La bonne chanson (1870)
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Sagesse (1881)
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Jadis et Naguère (1884)
Amour (1888)
Parallélement (avec frontispice de Rops) (1890)
Bonheur
Epigrammes (1894)

PROSE

Les poètes maudits (Corbière, Rimbaud et Mallarmé, première série) (1884)
Louise Leclercq, nouvelle, suivie de: *Le Poteau*, *Pierre Duckelet* et de *Mme. Aubin* (un acte)
Les Mémoires d'un neuf
Mes Héritages (1894)
Biographies littéraires publiées dans les *Hommes d'aujourd'hui*: *Leconte de Lisle*, *François Coppée*, *P. Verlaine*, *Villiers de l'Isle-Adam*, *J. Richépin*, *Armand Silvestre*, *Ed. de Goncourt*, *Barbey d'Aurevilly*, *Sully-Prudhomme*, *Leon Dierx*, *Rollinat*, *Stéphane Mallarmé*, *Arthur Rimbaud*, *L. Valler*, *A. Baïu*, *Charles Cros*, *Xavier de Ricard*, *Albert Mérat*, *José-Maria de Heredia*, *André Lemoyne*, *Anatole France*, *Raoul Ponchon*, *A. Theuriet*, *La Fenestre*, *Rene Ghil*, etc.
Autobiographie (1895)

THEATRE

Les Uns et Les Autres. Comedy in one act. Vaudeville, May 21, 1891.



One night in the year '84 — upon my word, I am getting old! I shall follow Prince Hal's advice and, after certain reformations, live cleanly in grey hairs. Well, one can't always be young, and it's a devil of a thing to have been young once. Eh, golden lads? Ay, a devil of a thing. And now I abdicate; my reign of youth is over; to you is the scepter, my dear fellow — to you, who are young, a lover of women, a drunkard of rhymes. To me is the twilight, the writing-table, and the fireplace. You shall love and rule and kiss many women, and you shall dream golden, splendid rhymes. I, in the twilight, summon the ghosts of women who were kissed too much, and sing over the old rhymes, threadbare now. On the whole, I think it is quite as pleasant! But it is well to have known the heroic candours and been ravished by the splendid banalities of eager youth. One's twilights are less tedious.

One night, in the autumn of '84, I say, certain folk gathered at a sort of Bohemian "cercle" held in an old house in the Rue de Rennes. In a big, naked room on the first floor these folk gathered weekly to drink beer and discuss aesthetics; those who drank absinthe discussed philosophy. Charles Cros, with his crisp, curly hair, and face tawn as a Lascar's, was there; already far gone in drink, he leaned, with one elbow on the table, reciting in a hard, dry voice his last monologue — one Coquelin had just made

famous in drawing-rooms. His hands, already senile, trembled with alcoholic fever. I dare say he is dead now, this founder of a shadowy school of poets, this author of the "Coffret de Santal." The harsh voice ceased; his head fell on the table. From the dozen or more throats came howls of applause. Ah, what a crowd — this company which now belongs to the twilights of the past! A half-dozen shirts in the crowd were fairly clean; the rest were Verlainesque. And what rhymes were shouted over the wine and beer! The rhymes of young poets, in whose visions women are always undraped and disport an unusual luxury of "seins nacrés" and "hanches opulentes."

Hark! Upon my word, as though it were yesterday I can hear that devil of a Gascon, Fernand Icres, intoning in a barbarous accent:

Sa chevelure et sa poitrine,
Faisaient monter à ma narine
D'étranges parfums irritants.

Elle avait seize ans mais son buste,
Tout à la fois souple et robuste,
En portait vingt en verité.

There were women there, too. One I remember vaguely through the smoke of innumerable twilights. This was Marie Krysinka, a Polish Jewess, who pounded melodramatic music out of the piano and was a poetess whose peculiar passion was corpses and snow. She used to hold "Thursdays" in her little apartment up five pairs of stairs in the Rue Monge. I heard afterward that she married an Archaeologist — or was it a manufacturer of wooden toothpicks? Something of the sort.

In the corner Verlaine glowered over his fifth glass of absinthe, whispering to himself.

The Cafe du Chalet had its day.

Then the young poets of the day, led, if I remember, by Emile Goudeau, migrated to the Cafe de l'Avenir, in the Place St. Michel; the tavern is now known to the newer crowd — Signoret and the like — as the Tavern of the Golden Sun. I was one of those who subscribed a fund to furnish that "soussol," where such famous Sunday nights were passed. Eheu, fugaces, anni labuntur — a decade and more ago. We were all worshippers of Verlaine. We had read "Sagesse." We had lent the poet five-franc pieces; had bought him absinthe; had helped him up the hospital steps when his diseases were too many for him. It is something to be proud of, for in those days it was a distinction to appreciate the greatest of French poets — this battered, old Verlaine. Anatole France, who, since then, has written a beautiful fable of which Verlaine is the hero, in those days did not dare to introduce the name in his bourgeois articles. That sombre



and vindictive Creole, Leconte de Lisle, had, a few years before, denounced Paul Verlaine as an employee of the Commune, in the gentle hope of getting him shot. Even Coppee, this gentlest of poets, sneered at him. George Moore, who had just gone to London, echoed these sentiments in a book he wrote about that time—“The Confessions of a Young Man.” Mr. Moore has since recanted. You can not judge the George Moore of to-day by his opinions in that book.

Eh, bien, some of us, however, carried the oriflamme of Verlaine. These were Charles Vignier, Gustav Kahn, a maker of impeccable verse, Charles Morice—to name only those who have achieved fame. A score or more went down under the iron feet of life, and their names shall never be written; the songs and singers are dead.

He sat among us there, this old man, with the dirty neckerchief and the ribald and unclean speech. And is it thus I remember him? No. I remember him best when, with his glowing eyes half closed, he recited some new sonnet or unforeseen verses—splendid as golden coins.

* * * * *

His face was like the mask of Socrates, with its high cheek-bones and simian mouth; the nose was flat, camous, broken; the great bald head covered with knobs like a battered helmet; a draggled beard hung about the cheeks and chin; the ears were flat and large. The eyes, those deep-set, dreamy, intolerably vague eyes, glowered at one from beneath rugged, square-hewn brows.

This was Paul Verlaine, as you might have seen him any day, slouching along the street or lounging over a marble-topped table in the Cafe Francois Premier. Or at other times you might have seen him sitting in his bed in some foul mansarde, an old man, grimy and drunk, in a greasy night-cap and abominable linen; George Moore saw him thus, once upon a time, blaspheming. Degas, the great painter, has recorded an impression of Verlaine in one of his most famous pictures, “The Absinthe Drinker.” Verlaine is sitting at a table over an opalescent glass of absinthe; near by sprawls a woman of the streets, wretched, tipsy, pitiable. It is well that this impression should be recorded. In this poor, great poet there was much of Walt Whitman’s fine humanity. He, too, might have sung:

The prostitute draggles her shawl, her bonnet bobs on her tipsy and pimpled neck;
The crowd laughs at her blackguard oaths, the men jeer and wink at each other—
Miserable! I do not laugh at your oaths nor jeer you!

He was a very gentle poet, and in all the world’s misery there was nothing alien to him.

* * * * *

He had a face vizard-like, unchanging, made impudent with the use of evil deeds. But the eyes were those of the penitent thief turned toward Him on the middle cross.

* * * * *

I would rather talk of his books. He was the greatest poet of this generation.

His life was a tragedy of passion; his work is a shadow of his life. Once I called him a Socratic Pierrot; Morice approved the phrase and made it classic. There were two men in Verlaine—Socrates and Pierrot; Saint Francis of Assisi and the Marquis de Sade. Even in age, when his pale soul was fatigued by the years, he was still like the saint and the mountebank, a child. Life excited and irritated him; then fatigued he wept like a tired child. The tears and laughter—these are his poems. He had dreams, horribly beautiful, in which Bonus Angelus wrestled with Malus Angelus. These, too, are his poems.

Poor, wandering, vagrom child, all dabbled with sin; now that he is dead, he strives and prays in Purgatory, but in the end he shall see God face to face.

* * * * *

I would rather talk of his books.

He lived feverishly. He was a lover of life. Life as it is he loved—the gust of pleasure and the fear of pain, the idolatry of appearances, the make-believe of virtue; he loved even life’s mediocrities. He had a horror of sin even when he sinned. The defunct symbols of the Pardoner haunted him. The pendulum of his life swung between riot and renunciation, from the hair-cloth to the cloth of gold.

“How do you write?” I asked him.

“En fievre,” he said.

He recorded his impressions of life frankly, and since he had an innate sense of harmony, musically. Dear Lord! how musically. Words languid,



SUR L’HERBE

L’abbé divague.—Et toi, marquis
T’u mets de travers ta persique.
—Ce vieux vin de Chypre est exquis.
Moins, Camargo, que votre nuque.

—Ma flamme...—Do, mi, sol, la, si.
—L’abbé, ta noircœur se devroule.
—Que je meure, mesdames, si
Je ne vous decroche une étoile.

—Je voudrais être petit chien!
—Embrassons nos bergeres, l’une
Après l’autre.—Messieurs, eh bien?
—Do, mi, sol.—He! bonsoir, la tume!

PAUL VERLAIN, Fêtes galantes

Je suis venu, calme orphelin,
Riche de mes seuls yeux tranquilles,
Vers les hommes des grandes villes:
Ils ne m’ont pas trouvée malin.

A vingt ans un trouble nouveau
Sous le nom d’“amourees flammees”
M’a fait trouver belles les femmes:
Elles ne m’ont pas trouvée beau.

Quoique sans patrie et sans roi
Et très brave, ne l’étant guère,
J’ai voulu mourir à la guerre:
La mort n’a pas voulu de moi.

Suis-je ne trop tôt ou trop tard?
Qu'est-ce que je fais dans ce monde?
O vous tous, ma peine est profonde!
Priez pour le pauvre Gaspar.

P. V.





*La lune blanche
Luit dans les bois;
De chaque branche
Part une voix
Sous la ramee . . .*

O bien-aimee.

*L'étang reflète,
Profond miroir,
La silhouette
Du saule noir
Ou le vent pleure . . .*

*Revons, c'est l'heure.
Un vase et tendre
A paisement
Sèmeile descendre
Du firmament
Que l'astre irise . . .*

C'est l'heure exquise.

VERLAINE



cajoling, tender, enervant; words that were caresses—his art was at once subtle, refined, difficult, and inveterately young. His was the subtle simplicity of the Middle Ages. Huysmans, with fine clairvoyance, saw that he was sib to Villon. His individuality was dominant and insistant, as of some great soul of the fifteenth century. He had a profound, incurable, and salutary egotism.

In his youth he was seduced by the virtuosities of the Parnassians. The real Verlaine appeared in the "Romances sans Parole," in "Sagesse," and in certain miraculous poems of "Jadis et Naguere." The "Poemes Saturniens," which appeared in 1867, are purely Parnassian. Fluent verse, ardent, sombre, mad, it was impeccably fashioned. But the chef-d'œuvre of this school—du bois, du bois et encore du bois—is "Les Fetes Galantes." Here is the dream of a pure poet. The verse is formal; it hints of pose and powder and the Pompadour; it is sceptical and frivolous, but very sincere. See, then, in a park de Watteau—perhaps in Rubens' "Garden of Love"—nonchalant girls lounge and whisper scandal, while overhead the new stars shine; stately ladies pass, insolently beautiful; the powdered Marquis nods to the silken abbe—

* * * * *

With the "Romances sans Paroles" he broke with the Impeccables.

This was the troubled period of his life, the Rimbaud period of his life, which ended in the penitentiary of Mons.

Il pleure dans mon coeur
Comme il pleure sur la ville—

But why should I quote the verses which you have known, which you have loved, which you have whispered in the impenetrable hours? After the "Romances" came his book of penitence, the triumphal book, the Wisdom of Paul Verlaine. Here, then, is "Sagesse," a white lily plucked out of the pashed mire of a dirty and inquiet life; here, then, is "Sagesse," the most beautiful book of poetry written since "Les Fleurs du Mal."

Sin had lost its savour. He knelt at the altar he had despised and prayed to the God he had mocked. He had speech with God, thus:

Mon Dieu m'a dit: Mon fils, il faut m'aimer.

But the penitent cried:

Je ne veux pas! Je suis indigne. Vous, la Rose Sur la seule fleur d'une innocence mi-close,
Immense des purs vents de L'amour, o Vous, tous Qui moi, moi pouvoir Vous aimer? Etes-vous fous,
Les coeurs des saints, o Vous qui futes le Jaloux Pere, Fils, Esprit?
D'Israel, Vous la chaste abeille qui se pose

God said again:

Il faut m'aimer. Je suis Ces Fous que tu nommais.

And then God makes plain the blessed Mystery of the Church, and the poor wretch, full of trouble and hope, sees a vision.

Des Anges bleus et blancs portes sur des pavois.

* * * * *

Verlaine was not a man of letters. At the end of his "Ars Poetica," after having laid down the laws of indecisive poetry, he says with divine disdain: "All the rest is literature."

His own precepts explain his art:

Que ton vers soit la chose envoilee Ou'on sent qui fuit d'une ame en allee Vers d'autres cieux a d'autres amours.	Que ton vers soit la bonne aventure Eparse au vent crise du matin Qui va fleurant la menthe et le thym.
---	---

C'est des beaux yeux derriere des voiles,
C'est le grand jour tremblant de midi.
C'est, par un ciel d'automne attiedi,
Le bleu fouillis des claires étoiles!

Verlaine attempted the impossible. He strove all his life to reconcile the Seven Deadly Sins and the three Cardinal Virtues. He wished to erect in the market-place of Gemorrah a statue of the Blessed Virgin. A weak and futile man, he was eminently human. He was simple and intense. He was an exaltation, an exasperation of the modern man, at once mocking and mystic.

Now being dead—and saved or damned—he is an accomplice in the Eternal Mystery.

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